

Mazda CX-3 delivers solid small crossover performance



By John Stein
For Auto Edition

I recently tested a 2016 Mazda CX-3 in the Grand Touring AWD trim and this newcomer to the crossover market is the starting point for a Mazda crossover lineup that continues to impress.

The Mazda CX-3 is about the size of a Mazda3 hatchback. The CX-3 rides higher and touts the same long, low Kodo design hood as the Mazda3. And that's a good thing. The CX-3 comes in three trims: Sport, Touring and Grand Touring, all-wheel drive is available as an option in each, and standard on Grand Touring models.

The CX-3 is distinctly different with visual impact coming from the flowing profile that ascends to its pinnacle above the driver and dives slow and low into the front fascia. It's a sporty, refined, and ultimately unique look for a relatively moderate price.

Inside the cabin you will find space that feels bigger than is really is, thanks in part to the plentiful glass surround. While the style may be modest, Mazda employs premium materials and excellent fit and finish to deliver a comfortable and accommodating layout.

In general, space is at a premium in the CX-3 and although things are a bit snug around the center armrest, it never feels too tight. I appreciated the keyless entry

and the huge moonroof added a feeling of more interior expanse.

Front seats are finely bolstered and very comfortable. The seats are heated, but manual controls are the only option. The front seats featured a combination of leather trim and Lux Suede. Rear seating is a bit tighter, but enough to seat two adults. Rear headrests slide down out of sight when not in use. Drop the rear seats and like all hatchbacks, the CX-3's cargo area is huge.

A 2.0-liter, 146-horsepower engine is mated to a smooth-shifting six-speed automatic transmission. This engine handled all my commands but strained a bit on a couple occasions while merging and getting up to immediate highway speed. The Grand Touring trim has all-wheel drive and it performed admirably in snowy conditions. The great handling CX-3 delivers does not come at any cost in ride comfort. Mazda got this car's suspension perfectly matched. Normal bumps and road imperfections are handled with ease.

Our test car also had fantastic adaptive (moving) headlights. Even the high beams sweep from side to

2016 Mazda CX-3

Category:	Compact SUV
MSRP:	From \$19,960
MPG:	29 city, 35 highway
Dimensions:	168" L x 70" W x 61" H
Engine:	2.0L 4-cylinder
Horsepower:	146 HP
Base Price:	\$19,960

side as you turn at night. Last, Mazda offers a head-up display. You will not find this combination of premium features at this price point in any other car or crossover – except in other Mazdas.

My CX-3 tester offered Advanced forward collision prevention, an impressive offering for this price point, and it touts a Top Safety Pick Plus designation. Families can feel safe in the 2016 CX-3.

With a base price of \$19,960, and my top-line tester landing at \$29,970, there is a landing spot for most buyers to find their perfect fit. Overall, the CX-3 is a marvelous compact crossover that has unique styling and the value that deem it a must-consideration for any buyer in this class.

